

In 2019, São Tomé and Príncipe made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government launched the Family Program to implement education policies and provide cash stipends to vulnerable families. However, children in São Tomé and Príncipe engage in the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation. Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. The Labor Code permits children younger than age 14 to work under certain circumstances, which is not consistent with international standards. In addition, limited financial resources hampered law enforcement efforts and prevented the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor from being implemented. Social programs also do not address child labor in all relevant sectors, including in agriculture.



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## I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in São Tomé and Príncipe engage in the worst forms of child labor in commercial sexual exploitation. (1) Children also perform dangerous tasks in agriculture. (2) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in São Tomé and Príncipe. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.



**Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	22.6 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	89.2
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	24.9
Primary Completion Rate (%)		84.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2017, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020. (3)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 5 (MICS 5), 2014. (4)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

**Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity**

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming,† including weeding and fertilizing† (2,5,6) Fishing,† including line and hook fishing (2,6)
Industry	Carpentry and woodworking (7) Construction† (2)
Services	Working in shops, restaurants, and bars† (2,5) Street work,† including begging and street vending† (2,7)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation (1)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.




## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

São Tomé and Príncipe has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

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**Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor**

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in São Tomé and Príncipe's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work.

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor**

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Article 268(2) of the Labor Code (8)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 274 of the Labor Code; Article 171 of the Civil Code (8,9)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Work List in Annex IV of Labor Code (8)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 159–160 and 181 of the Penal Code (10)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 160 and 181 of the Penal Code (10)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 179–182 of the Penal Code (10)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 279–280 and 289 of the Penal Code (10)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	17	Legislation title unknown (11)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 1 of Decree-Law 3/83 (12)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15†	Articles 11–12 of the Basic Education System Law (13)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 12 of the Basic Education System Law (13)

† Age calculated based on available information (13)

The Labor Code permits children younger than age 14 to work under certain circumstances, which is not consistent with international labor standards. In addition, the Labor Code permits children age 14, who have completed their compulsory education, to perform light work that is not deemed harmful to their health or development; however, special legislation specifying the activities and conditions in which light work may be undertaken has yet to be adopted. (8)

The minimum age protections contained in the Legal Regime of Individual Employment Conditions do not apply to children working outside of a formal labor relationship, such as children who are self-employed. (14,15)

### III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs	Enforces labor laws, including child labor. (5)
Ministry of Justice and Human Rights	Enforces criminal laws against the worst forms of child labor. (5)

### Labor Law Enforcement

In 2019, labor law enforcement agencies in São Tomé and Príncipe took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including financial resource allocation.

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	\$20,000 (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	6 (1)	3 (5)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (1)	Yes (5)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	N/A	N/A (5)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	No (1)	No (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	180 (16)	50 (5)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (1)	Unknown
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	1 (1)	0 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	0 (1)	N/A (5)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	0 (1)	N/A (5)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (1)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	No (1)	No (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (1)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (1)	Yes (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (1)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (1)	Yes (5)

Reports indicate there are a total of three labor inspectors and five assistants in the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Although inspections are permitted in all sectors, they are seldom conducted in the informal sector, in which instances of child labor are more prevalent, and are rarely conducted at worksites. (5) Reports also indicate that the allotted budget for the labor inspectorate was insufficient to cover operating costs, including fuel and transportation. (5)

Children found working during inspections by labor inspectors are referred to the Department of Social Protection and Solidarity in the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. (1)

### Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2019, criminal law enforcement agencies in São Tomé and Príncipe took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including training for criminal investigators.

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	No (1)	N/A (5)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	N/A (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	No (1)	No (5)
Number of Investigations	0 (1)	Unknown
Number of Violations Found	0 (1)	0 (5)

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**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (Cont.)**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	0 (1)	0 (5)
Number of Convictions	0 (1)	0 (5)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A	0 (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (1)	Yes (5)

During the reporting year, investigators lacked resources, including transportation, fuel and other necessities to carry out investigations. (5)

Children found by Ministry of Justice and Human Rights officials are referred to the Department of Social Protection and Solidarity in the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs for integration and counseling services. (5)

## IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

**Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor**

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Anti-Child Labor Committee	Leads efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. (17) Led by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. (18) In 2019, conducted workshops and seminars for government officials. (5)
Department of Social Protection and Solidarity, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs	Provides counseling and integration services to children found during labor inspections and criminal investigations. (1) Due to a lack of financial resources, the Department of Social Protection and Solidarity was inactive during the reporting period.

## V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including funding and implementation.

**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor**

Policy	Description
National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor	Guides the government's efforts to combat child labor. (19) Lack of funding prevented the implementation of the policy during the reporting period. (5)

## VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2019, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Program	Description
Family Program ( <i>Programa Família</i> )*†	\$10 million World Bank-funded, 4-year education program to implement education policies. In addition, the program provides cash stipends in the amount of \$55, distributed twice a month, to the poorest families. (5)
Support Centers†	Three government-funded centers, run by NGOs, operating in areas with high concentrations of poor families, orphans, and street children. Provide household stipends to keep children in school, and teach income-generating skills. (20) Active in 2019. (5)
Disadvantaged Mothers Program ( <i>Mães Carenciadas</i> )†	Government program that provides family stipends, school materials, and uniforms on an as-needed basis. The support is distributed by social workers. (21) Active in 2019. (5)
Decent Work Country Program (2018–2021)†	Government program in collaboration with ILO that aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor through legislative action and strategic programs. (1,22)

\* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of São Tomé and Príncipe.

Although São Tomé and Príncipe has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the problem, especially in agriculture.

### VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in São Tomé and Príncipe (Table 11).

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2014 – 2019
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2019
	Ensure that the minimum age for work of age 15 applies to all children.	2018 – 2019
	Adopt legislation defining the activities and conditions permissible for light work.	2018 – 2019
	Ensure that all children are protected by law, including children who are self-employed.	2015 – 2019
Enforcement	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by initiating targeted inspections based on analysis of data related to risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents.	2017 – 2019
	Provide inspectors and investigators with appropriate training, and equip labor inspectors and criminal investigators with the necessary resources to conduct inspections, including fuel and transportation.	2009 – 2019
	Publish information on the number of inspections conducted at worksites and the number of investigations conducted.	2018 – 2019
Coordination	Ensure that coordinating bodies to combat child labor are able to fulfill their mandates, including the Department of Social Protection and Solidarity.	2019
Government Policies	Ensure that the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor has sufficient resources for implementation.	2018 – 2019
Social Programs	Implement programs that specifically target child labor in agriculture.	2010 – 2019

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